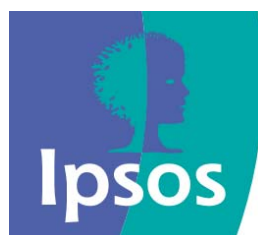


# **The equality duties and schools: Twelve case studies - examples of implementing the equality duties to improve pupil outcomes**

Developed through The Equality Duties and Schools research conducted by Ipsos MORI and to be read in conjunction with the research report, published in summer 2011.



Please note that the views expressed in this annex are those of the authors and schools, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The case studies are self-defined positive practice by schools, arising from their implementation of the equality duties, which improved pupil outcomes. They are published to share with other schools.

## **Secondary schools**

1. Using the equality duties to tackle under-achievement among ethnic minority boys.
2. Using the equality duties to tackle racially motivated incidents.
3. Using the equality duties to develop new equality schemes and action plans in consultation with and involvement from pupils.
4. Using the equality duties to raise participation/tackle gender stereotyping in sports both within the curriculum and in out-of-school activities.
5. Using the equality duties to provide intensive English language support to improve Roma pupils' learning experience.
6. Using the equality duties to tackle bullying, to increase pupil achievement and participation.

## **Equality duties and schools      CASE STUDY 1**

Using the equality duties to tackle under-achievement among ethnic minority boys.

### **A description of the school**

This is a smaller than average non-selective secondary school (c.700 pupils) with a sixth form (c.100 pupils) located in a small town on the edge of London. The local authority has a mix of selective grammar and non-selective upper schools. Students' prior academic attainment when they start school is below the national average. The proportion of students from ethnic minority backgrounds is above the national average and most are of Pakistani heritage. Many ethnic minority students do not speak English as their first language.

### **A description of the equality issues facing the school**

Although the school is located in an affluent county on the edge of London, more than a third of pupils come from households categorised as 'hard-pressed' using the ACORN geo-demographic classification.<sup>1</sup> In addition, around one-fifth of the school's pupils come from a background where many do not speak English as their first language. The combining influence of deprivation, some low expectations within families about schooling and English as a second language were felt to be fuelling academic underachievement and issues with behaviour among some ethnic minority pupils at the school, particularly boys.

### **Drivers towards equality-related action/initiatives taken**

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act (RRA) 2000, the Ofsted inspection framework, the Race Equality Duty, and the school's improvement plan (SIP) all appear to be driving the school's work in taking corrective action to address the problems of under-achievement and issues with behaviour among some ethnic minority boys. For example, in acting on the under-achievement of ethnic minority boys, the

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<sup>1</sup> ACORN is a geo-demographic segmentation of the UK population. Using census data, lifestyle survey records and other data sets it segments small neighbourhoods, postcodes or consumer households into five categories, these include: (1) wealthy achievers; (2) urban prosperity; (3) comfortably off; (4) moderate means; and (5) hard-pressed.

school is meeting its duty (in line with the RRA) to promote equality of opportunity. By ensuring students who have English as an additional language make good academic progress the school is fulfilling a requirement of the Ofsted inspection framework.

In addition, the school's SIP sets out several objectives which influenced the school's work and approach in tackling the identified equality issues. The first SIP objective relevant to the school's equality-related work is that every pupil will achieve or exceed his or her potential, for which the relevant success criteria are: a) value-added is improved in all Key Stages and impacts on standards of achievement; b) the minority of students who are disengaged from learning achieve success; and c) every member of staff feels confident in using data to support the monitoring of pupils' progress with comparative data shared across subjects. The second objective is that the school will develop external links which support educational opportunities. The relevant success criteria for the second objective are: a) parents of ethnic minority students are more involved in their child's education; and b) external agencies are used to support students' welfare and academic progress.

### **The process and actions taken by the school to address these equality issues**

A review of Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) scores and the school's behaviour alert system led the school to identify that boys of ethnic minority origin were under-achieving academically and also exhibited more concerning behavioural issues than other pupils. Having identified the issues, the school decided to take corrective action.

In accordance with its SIP objective, the school sought to work with external organisations which in this instance could offer specialist provision in helping disaffected and disengaged pupils. The school had a pre-existing relationship with a charity which had delivered a positive activities project leading to raised aspirations among female pupils felt to be at risk of disengagement. Given the charity's successful track record, the school felt a further intervention, this time with under-achieving boys

would lead to positive impacts on ethnic minority boys' outcomes, in particular to improve behaviour, raise aspiration, and facilitate a more positive attitude to learning.

'The hope would be that they would raise their involvement in the learning process, they were disengaged previously or at risk of not seeing relevance for the work they were doing.'

Headteacher

Having agreed this as the strategy, the school sought to secure some additional funding from the local authority. The additional funding was secured and was used by the school's pastoral team to work with the charity to design the project. Crucially, the project had to be organised to fit around the boys' normal curriculum to ensure they did not fall behind while involved in the project.

For one day every two weeks (during two school terms), 12 ethnic minority boys who had achieved low SATs scores, exhibited behavioural issues and ultimately were at risk of becoming excluded from school, attended the charity's premises to take part in the project. During the day, youth workers involved pupils in positive activities, such as using role-play to resolve conflict and group work (workshops and team-building exercises) to discuss and plan removing real and perceived barriers to work. The charity's experience tells them that by removing pupils from the traditional learning environment it increases the pupils' engagement levels and ensures the project is more effective.

Furthermore, the project youth workers, who were invariably of similar ethnic origin to the boys and who had in the past experienced similar problems themselves, were seen to be positive role models for the boys. This was felt to be beneficial as it was considered a facilitator for the boys being more open and engaged in the project.

'Within the charity there are people from the BME community who have struggled with their lives in school and made a positive

impact on their futures and that has helped I'm sure, it has had more of an impact on the students as result of that.'

Headteacher

Pupils benefited from intensive support during two terms of the academic year. For example, working together on activities in which participants plan their future and look at barriers to success and ways in which to overcome these. The school felt that the added value of this initiative was that it also tracked the progress of all participants, enabling the school to assess the impact the project was having on each of the boys who took part. Each month, every participating pupil would take part in an interview with a youth worker and member of staff in which changes in their behaviour, learning engagement and overall academic improvement would be assessed.

'It is truly positive action. Many people might stand up with horror but it was thought through, planned and we agreed it was a way forward. We are all aiming for the same positive outcomes.'

Headteacher

### **Impact of the action taken to address the equality issue(s)**

In terms of impact, the school expected the pupils to increase their engagement in their learning experience and to appreciate the relevance of education. The school believes the project had a positive impact on pupil outcomes which otherwise would not have happened. For example, some of the ethnic minority boys who participated in the project are now working towards Level 2 and/or 3 courses in the school's sixth form, while others have progressed into further education to work towards a vocational qualification. The behaviour of ethnic minority boys also improved, as identified by the reduced number of short-term exclusions.

'The impression certainly is that those groups of boys did benefit. The fixed-term exclusions and the trouble they used to get into here fell. Approach to their students was better; I can't say perfect

but it did improve. It was a bit of an opportunity for them to mature. The cynic might say that they would have done that anyway.’  
Headteacher

The school also indicated that the targeted support for ethnic minority boys made a positive impact on the school’s Key Stage 4 results for these pupils, which have increased year-on-year since its inception. In addition, the overall progression of all ethnic minority pupils from school to further education has increased.

‘Where we have involved small groups of students in support with positive actions it has had a major impact on their achievement and the way they operate around the school community and so there is a track record that these smaller pilot opportunities prove it will make an impact on these communities.’  
Headteacher

The school also confirmed that the initiative has had a wide-ranging impact on other pupil outcomes, including improved attendance, improved academic performance, improved behaviour and progression. During the catch-up review sessions with the participating boys, the school also identified that the pupils had an increased sense of responsibility for their own learning and were more focused on their future employment options.

‘We saw an impact on the fixed-term exclusions and a fall in the trouble they used to get in to and certainly a better approach to their studies.’  
Headteacher

### **Enablers and barriers**

Although not unique to this particular equality issue, the school firmly believes that the work it does to identify and tackle equality-related issues is aided by the strong analytical skills which senior staff possess. These members of staff use their analytical skills to review and assess



data and information related to pupil outcomes. Without these skills, the school might otherwise fail to identify differences in pupil outcomes and would not therefore be in such a good position to take corrective action. The school believes that by having these skills in house (that is, held by members of its staff), it enables the school and its staff to address equality-related issues head-on.

‘The heads of year who are focused on the academic potential of young people. And developing leadership approach whereby you recognise careful analysis and evaluation and strategic approach to your planning. If this was done in a random environment it would not have happened, you may not have spotted the issues or spotted the need.’

Headteacher

Clear communication between the school and parents of pupils who participate in the project is also considered an important factor in determining the overall success of the equality-related work that the school conducts. By engaging with parents early on in the process, the school was able to tackle any concerns the parents had about their child being stigmatised; in return the school believes that it has fostered improved relationships with some of its pupils’ parents. This is also enabling the school to meet one of its SIP objectives (to increase ethnic minority parental involvement with the school).

‘Parents were involved in setting up the project. They could either engage or not, but they all did. We had the support of all parents which was good news. They were first alerted about the project and we invited them in to talk through what we wanted them to do. And we had a very good Q and A session. They didn’t want their youngsters to be seen as stigmatised which was a risk we were worried about but the activity was seen as an addition to their schooling and parents wanted their youngsters to get on board. So that was quite good.’

Headteacher

The school believes that sometimes low aspirations among parents and families of pupils is an issue to tackle in the future. Although the school is unable to identify such families, it hopes that improved engagement and consultation between school and parents would help to identify need and address equality-related issues at an earlier point in the pupil's learning journey.

'We want to involve parents more, to get parents taking more responsibility. Get parents involved more in small groups to talk and get parents involved in the process and the planning and helping the school in establishing a need.'

Headteacher

## **Equality duties and schools      CASE STUDY 2**

Using the equality duties to tackle racially motivated incidents.

### **A description of the school**

Located in London, this is a large (c.1,500 pupils) fully comprehensive secondary school with a rapidly expanding sixth form. All students' attainment on entry is broadly in line with national averages, although this represents a wide range of abilities. The students come from a wide range of social and cultural backgrounds. Almost 50 per cent of students come from an ethnic minority background and approximately 30 per cent speak at least one of 51 different languages at home. However, most of the students are able to speak English. The proportion of pupils with a learning difficulty and/or disability is below that recorded nationally and the two main groups identified by the school are those with a moderate learning difficulty and those with specific learning difficulties (such as dyslexia). The number of students eligible for free school meals is around the national average.

### **A description of the equality issues facing the school**

The school's aim is to provide a learning experience which enables pupils to have the best possible outcomes, in terms of educational achievement and attainment. In order to achieve this, the school believes its environment and atmosphere must be conducive for all pupils to engage with and concentrate on learning.

'If you are not providing for a harmonious environment, if you're not enabling children to develop as well as they can, then they are not going to achieve. We want to get good results.'

Assistant headteacher

The school believes the realisation of this aim could potentially be undermined by identity-based bullying and violence within the school such as name-calling, and (to some extent) more extreme forms of behaviour (such as ethnic gang violence) within the local community.

Therefore, in accordance with its own zero-tolerance approach, the school sought to eradicate all forms of racially motivated incidents.

### **Drivers towards equality-related action/initiatives taken**

One of the main drivers in tackling racially motivated incidents was the school's belief that pupils affected by incidents of this kind would perform worse academically and be less socially and emotionally developed. Government policy and legislation, in particular the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, also shapes the school's response in tackling allegations of racial incidents. For example, the school has a duty to report all proven racial incidents to the local authority.

'The local authority was the prime mover in that initially we were required to provide them with information about racial incidents. We would deal with racial incidents as part of our behavioural and sanctions policy. We made it quite clear that name calling, that racial attacks, would be dealt with within that scheme, so we knew what we wanted to do within the school. And we fed that through to the people who collected that information back at the LA. In the last 4 or 5 years the two have meshed together.'

Assistant headteacher

These drivers led the school to think about and develop its own systems and procedures for tackling racially motivated incidents, in particular, combining the school's race equality policy with the school's sanctions and behaviour policy.

### **The process and actions taken by the school to address these equality issues**

In order to ensure that ethnic, race and cultural differences within the pupil population and wider community do not create barriers to learning, the school embarked on a programme of activity designed to tackle and deal effectively with racial incidents.

One of the first actions the school pursued was to develop a race equality policy; this took place around four years ago. In order to develop an appropriate and meaningful policy that would be embraced by the wider school community (pupils, staff and parents), the school invited feedback from parents of ethnic minority students on the draft policy. The school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) felt that by consulting parents, the policy would take account of the wide-ranging discrimination issues which individuals from an ethnic minority background may experience. It was also felt that this was an effective way of raising awareness among parents about the school's race equality priorities.

Through focus groups, parents were presented with a draft version of the race equality policy to review and to provide feedback on. Allowing parents to engage and contribute to the process of developing the policy meant that the school also secured buy-in to approaches it would take to tackle racial discrimination and other associated problems faced by ethnic minority pupils at the school. For example, parents worked with the school to agree that in proven cases of racial incident, a zero-tolerance approach would be taken. This consensus between school and parents on the school's response to a proven racial incident also helped to formulate the school's behavioural policy, for example, mandatory exclusions for proven racial incidents.

'We felt that, you know, you can run off a policy can't you, but its got be relevant to those people for whom its written so we were getting the impressions for people who know about racism, discrimination and disadvantage so that's how we formulate our policy.'

Assistant headteacher

Another key step taken by the school was to improve the level of awareness and understanding of the school's policy and expectations with regards to race equality and behaviour and, in particular, understanding ethnic, race and cultural differences. A number of specific activities were pursued, to include staff and pupils regularly speaking in

assemblies about name-calling. The school believed making pupils as well as staff responsible for communicating key messages about its racial policy and the school's expectations for racially acceptable behaviour would be more effective than relying solely on staff to do this. By using pupils as communicators, the school felt that other pupils would be influenced by positive peer pressure and, consequently, behave more appropriately. Posters have also been placed around the school which emphasise the school's zero-tolerance approach to name-calling.

In addition, the whole school community (pupils, staff and parents) is involved in activities (such as school festivals) which celebrate the different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds and communities represented among the pupil population – for instance, Eid and the Jewish New Year. The curriculum (such as Social Studies, Personal Social, and Health Education (PSHE), and Religious Education (RE)) is also used as a forum for communicating and educating pupils about racial discrimination and racial equality.

'They know what's expected and what's not allowed and why. It's underpinned and supported by the lessons, the conversations that go on in those lessons, literature, the humanities, RE, asking questions about how people to relate to one another, about why its wrong to discriminate and the feelings that emanate from racism and prejudice.'

Assistant headteacher

The school has in place multiple systems for reporting racial incidents. For example, pupils can approach and speak to a member of staff, such as the head of pastoral support. If, however, pupils are uncomfortable reporting directly to a member of staff, then they can make use of pupil representatives at tutor, house and student council level. By having different reporting mechanisms available to pupils, the school believes this helps to encourage those pupils who might otherwise be reluctant to report an incident due to fear or embarrassment, to do so.

The school's system for recording and acting on reported racially motivated incidents has been in place for many years. Firstly, using an incident form, a member of staff will record the type of racially motivated incident that has been reported, for example, whether verbal or physical.

'And we have an incident sheet which is category for referral. Those incident forms are then passed on to the year co-coordinator usually and if it's a racial incident it's dealt with in behavioural terms if exclusion is warranted. And the recording of it and mediation work is dealt with by me.'

Assistant headteacher

The reporting of the incident then triggers the involvement of the assistant headteacher, who is obliged under RRA requirements to collect the following details: the timing and location of the incident, victim's and perpetrator's name, age, ethnicity and gender, type of incident, if the incident was proven or not, the school's action and its outcome and if other agencies, for example the police, are involved.

In order to collect this type of information, the assistant headteacher will undertake a detailed investigation of the incident, including gathering written statements from, and conducting face-to-face interviews with, the victim, perpetrator and eye witnesses (pupils and staff). This information will be used to determine the school's next steps; and in accordance with RRA requirements, is passed on to the local authority. The local authority analyses all racially motivated incidents from all schools within its locality and provides each school with a breakdown of the type of incidents at school and ward level. This information is shared among the school's pastoral team and alerts them to potential incidents among particular ethnic groups.

'The local authority would always provide us with a breakdown of information received from us and other schools in the borough so you would have comparison ward by ward, race by race and which

particular ethnic groups were being victimised and which predominantly were the perpetrators, that's quite valuable.'

Assistant headteacher

The school tends to adopt a two-tier approach to dealing with racial incidents. In cases where the racial incident is extreme (for example, violence) and proven, the school will enforce its zero-tolerance policy and the perpetrator will be given a short-term exclusion of between one and five days. However, in cases where the incident is less extreme (for example, verbal) and cannot be proven, the school embarks on a process of mediation. The mediation is overseen by the assistant headteacher and involves all parties (both the victim and alleged perpetrator). For example, the assistant headteacher would facilitate a reconciliation meeting in which differences between all parties would be discussed with the intention of resolution. A further meeting with the perpetrator would involve the setting of behaviour improvement targets by the assistant headteacher.

'We deal with most problems in that way [mediation]. We sit both parties down and talk them through and explain what the school's expectation is in terms of behaviour and lots of issues are resolved in this way.'

Assistant headteacher

### **Impact of the action taken to address the equality issue(s)**

The school believes its zero-tolerance approach towards tackling racially motivated incidents results in a number of positive outcomes for the whole school community. However, the school indicates it has not been possible to prove a causal link between action and some of the perceived impacts as no formal evaluation has been conducted.

The school has observed a small increase in the number of racial incidents being reported. The school believes this is not necessarily a bad thing as it indicates that pupils are confident in coming forward if they believe they are the victim of a racial incident. Furthermore, the



school believes that the approach it takes through mediation with the victim and alleged offender is helping the school to demonstrate that it actively listens, investigates and takes appropriate action.

‘If a child tells me they are offended by the way they were spoken to by a member of staff I would obviously record that. It is not for me to determine whether pupils experience that as a racial incident, if they do they do. It’s my responsibility to go to the member of staff and talk it through, then I go back to the pupil and say I have done x, y, z and ask if they are satisfied with this. It is that sort of mediation which demonstrates to the kids that you are listening and that you are taking what they say seriously and are willing to confront adults on their behalf.’

Assistant headteacher

The school believes its work in tackling racially motivated incidents (for example, providing events that celebrate cultural and ethnic diversity) has contributed to a greater sense of community within the school. The school also believes events such as these support community cohesion.

‘If pupils don’t experience some level of equality in school then we are not going to be able to deal with many of the problems that exist in some of the localities where territoriality, gang activity, ethnic rivalry exist.’

Assistant headteacher

The school believes that the zero-tolerance policy has helped to create an atmosphere within the school that allows all pupils, regardless of their background, to feel they can focus on their learning and improve academically. This has been evidenced by the school’s improving GCSE examination performance; in 2009, 65 per cent of Year 11 pupils achieved five A\*-C GCSEs (including mathematics and English), compared with 57 per cent of Year 11 pupils in the previous year.

‘It is hard to draw a direct correlation back to it, but if children aren’t comfortable and don’t have that emotional comfort then learning is not going to happen. I firmly believe that. Within the school we want them to be as comfortable and safe and able to express themselves as much as possible.’

Assistant headteacher

### **Enablers**

The school identified that embarking on a consultation exercise with parents and getting them to contribute to the revised race equality policy was a key factor in helping drive forward effective change at the school. Parental involvement in revising the policy ensured that both the school and the parents were buying into a shared philosophy and approach to identifying and tackling racial incidents at the school. The implementation of a zero-tolerance approach (that is, pupil exclusion) for all cases of proven racial incident was something that was put in place with the approval of both the school and parents.

## **Equality duties and schools      CASE STUDY 3**

Using the equality duties to develop new equality schemes and action plans in consultation with and involvement from pupils.

### **A description of the school**

This secondary school, located in an affluent area in south east England, is much larger than most, catering for c.1,600 pupils. Most students are from white British backgrounds. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average. A very small proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school has specialist status for mathematics and computing and is a designated training school, providing placements for trainee teachers. The school holds a number of awards, for example, the Inclusion Quality Mark.

### **A description of the equality issues facing the school**

Since 2003, Ofsted inspectors have visited the school on three occasions. Following the first inspection, the school was awarded with a good rating but fell to satisfactory following an inspection in 2007. The inspection report recognised that pupil attainment continued to be a focus for the school, as evidenced in the improving attainment rates.

‘The drive was results, results, results. We became an examination sausage factory.’

Vice principal

However, it was reported that the school ‘had lost sight of the whole child’ and, as a result, had unintentionally neglected its duty to provide appropriate access for all pupils. One of the key priorities for the school, therefore, was to put new structures and practice in place that ensured better access to on-site buildings and the curriculum for all disabled pupils.

### **Drivers towards equality-related action/initiatives taken**

As indicated above, the key driver which underpinned the school's work in addressing current and future accessibility issues stemmed from the findings of the 2007 inspection report. The school wanted, therefore, to get to a position whereby all current and future pupils were provided with equal access to all services being offered. The duties also played a role as the guidance provided a framework within which the school considered how to address the inequality experienced by disabled pupils at the school, as identified by the Ofsted inspection.

'What it [the duties] does is a bring a sense of structure and says "look, we know that you all think that all pupils should have equal access but have you thought about equality in these terms?" And it's set a framework by which we were able to then look at, "have we provided appropriate access for our disabled students?".'

Vice principal

### **The process and actions taken by the school to address these equality issues**

In order to tackle the accessibility issue, the school felt it needed to rewrite its disability equality scheme and action plan. As a result, the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), supported by the local authority and the school's principal, conducted a wide-ranging review of existing legislative and policy guidance related to equality for disabled pupils, for example, the equality duties, the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and the Every Child Matters framework. Following the review, the school felt it could use the duties as a framework to become more focused on making the learning environment and experience more appropriate to the existing and future learning needs of disabled pupils.

'That's how [the duties] had an effect on us – it's given us a framework that we can use in an appropriate way to analyse what we already had and look at where the gaps might be. If you're just left on your own without that structure you do the best you can but

you are not necessarily sure what it's meant to be. The duties have enabled us to look at what we have got and think about in a different way and that speeds up that process.'

Vice principal

Following the review, the school took action to update its disability equality scheme (which covers a two-year period) and in doing so set five core objectives: promoting equality of opportunity; eliminating discrimination; eliminating harassment, promoting positive attitudes; encouraging participation in public life; and taking steps to meet disabled pupils' needs even if this requires more favourable treatment. Using legislative guidance (the Disability Equality Duty), the school's SENCO and vice principal established the scheme's objectives.

'There was a legislative requirement that we had one [disability equality scheme]. We didn't think there was a choice so we just did it. It's not a massive document but it takes a lot of consideration, a lot of thinking about how you are going to do it and who is going to do what.'

Vice principal

Following the approval of the scheme's objectives, the school established a disability equality steering group. The steering group consists of staff (vice principal, senior pastoral staff, teaching staff with a disability, the school's SENCO), pupils with a range of disabilities and parents with children who have disabilities. The steering group was involved in deciding on the actions the school would take to meet the disability scheme's objectives.

'Once the steering group was put in place it had an input to the actions of the scheme.'

Vice principal

The action plan attached to the disability scheme's objectives was developed using the steering group's awareness and understanding of

disability issues. Different members of the steering group have responsibility for ensuring actions within the scheme are completed and within an agreed timescale. The steering group meets monthly to review progress and reports to the Senior Leadership Team to ensure that actions are completed on time. One of the first decisions taken by the steering group was to undertake a school-wide audit with the purpose of identifying any factors that might be affecting equality of opportunity for disabled pupils. For example, as part of the audit a review of disabled pupils' outcomes and a review of the level and suitability of access to on-site buildings were carried out.

As part of the audit, the disability steering group liaised with the school's data manager to better understand disabled pupils' educational attainment as well as their participation levels in extracurricular activities (that is, pupil outcomes). The audit found that the school lacked the ability to disaggregate pupil participation and attainment in sufficient detail by type of disability which meant a reduced ability to develop targeted interventions based on more specific types of disability.

The disability steering group recommended that new practices were required in order to be able to better identify and monitor disabled pupils' outcomes. These included: monitoring the extracurricular activity participation rate between disabled and non-disabled pupils; and collecting attainment, admission, transmission and exclusion data for pupils but broken down by newly and more relevant disability types (categories that are much more detailed than the current standard SEN categories).

The audit also involved an appraisal of the physical access for all on-site school buildings. This part of the audit was conducted by the SENCO and two disabled pupils (with visual and physical impairments). The assessment identified that accessibility to the on-site buildings and curriculum were barriers to equality of opportunity for disabled pupils because, for example, there were physical barriers, such as a lack of ramps.

As a result, the disability steering group agreed to develop a school-wide accessibility plan. The plan was drafted and approved following the involvement of all disabled pupils and input from the disability steering group. As a result, funding was made available from within existing school budgets and permanent ramps were erected and yellow markers placed on the sides of buildings and on the ground to improve accessibility to all on-site buildings. In terms of access to the curriculum, the disability equality group with support from staff are currently undertaking a review of teaching materials, modes of delivery and teaching support in order to ensure that teaching for disabled pupils is appropriate to meet their learning targets.

### **Impact of the action taken to address the equality issue(s)**

By tackling accessibility issues the school expects that all disabled students are better able to reach their potential, in terms of academic achievement and social development. As indicated above, the school has developed a more detailed data analysis system whereby levels of cognitive ability and aptitude at Key Stage 2 are assessed by more finite and specific categories of disability (more detailed than the standard SEN categories). Based on the Key Stage 2 assessments and the SENCO's in-depth understanding of disabled pupils' ability, subject heads then set value-added targets for every disabled pupil at Key Stage 3 and 4.

The disability steering group takes responsibility for monitoring the impact of the disability accessibility plan. Following regular one-to-one catch-ups with disabled pupils, the school's SENCO has learned that disabled pupils feel they and their peers are now being better provided for. In addition, the SENCO reported that more disabled pupils are less hesitant to approach staff to provide feedback on issues which affect them within the school. Disabled pupils have also reported they are happy that the accessibility issues which would have arisen in the future are now addressed.

Although the school does not currently cater for pupils who require wheelchair access, it knows from its close relationships with its local feeder schools that within two to three years it will. By taking action now, the school believes this shows they are taking the appropriate steps before the equality issue arises. In terms of the impact on the school, Ofsted's 2009 inspection gave the school an outstanding rating for its equality-related work.

'A shared focus on the needs of the students and an "ownership" of the school are evident and very effective at many different levels.'

Ofsted inspection report, 2009

### **Enablers and barriers**

The vice principal believes the success of the new equality-related practice was enabled by the school's SENCO. For example, the SENCO led in setting-up the disability steering group. In terms of challenges, it has taken a considerable amount of time and resource to develop the method for collecting and analysing more detailed disability group data to enable the school to evidence the impact of the school's work in tackling accessibility. The vice principal felt that, in hindsight, the school could have benefitted from expert advice on measuring the impact of equality-related activities.

'In the future, independent advice and independent measurement of what we have done would have helped us to evidence impact more quickly.'

Vice principal



## **Equality duties and schools      CASE STUDY 4**

Using the equality duties to raise participation/tackle gender stereotyping in sports both within the curriculum and in out-of-school activities.

### **A description of the school**

This Academy is based in the north east of England and is a mixed-sex school catering for pupils aged 11-16 years old. The school serves six wards – all of which have very high deprivation levels – and 56 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The ratio of boys to girls is 4:3 at Key Stage 3 and 3:2 at Key Stage 4. Ninety-seven per cent of pupils are white British.

The school opened in 2002 to replace two local failing schools and over the years the school has experienced considerable challenges. For example, there have been six headteachers appointed since 2002 and in 2005/06 the school spent a period of time in special measures. Levels of attainment, however, have improved considerably since the school opened. In 2002, 15 per cent of pupils were achieving 5 A\*-C grades at GCSE (not including English and maths) and this has now risen to 85 per cent.

The school faces a number of significant challenges. These include attracting well-qualified teachers, tackling low levels of literacy among pupils (70 per cent of pupils entering at Year 7 are considered to have a reading ability two years below their age) and falling pupil numbers (which is likely to have an impact on the school budget and staffing numbers). Although the school is performing well on targets related to its pupil profile, it is still classed as a 'failing school' by the government as less than 30 per cent of pupils are achieving 5 A\*-C grades at GCSE (including maths and English).

### **A description of the equality issues facing the school**

Around four years ago, the school decided that it needed to take action on extremely low levels of participation in sports (both in and out of

school hours) by female pupils. This had been an ongoing problem for years and was frequently noted through staff observation. In addition to this issue, the school also recognised that gender stereotyping in sport for *all* pupils needed to be tackled. At this time, the school offered a very limited and ‘traditional’ sports curriculum (Physical Education (PE) lessons largely consisted of football for boys and netball for girls), and there was also a culture of separating male and female pupils for teaching:

‘When I first arrived we still had very traditional sports going on. The lads were playing football and always played football. And opportunities for the girls were somewhat limited. With changing society now, the girls now don’t always want to play team sports.’  
Director of learning for sport

The school believes that PE department circumstances at this time were not conducive to addressing such equality issues. Staffing was very unstable and inconsistent, comprising just two members of permanent staff and rolling supply teachers (coming from other departments within the school and external agencies). PE department attitudes were also considered to be fuelling low levels of engagement in sports (and low participation as a result). The staff also appeared to lack innovative ways of engaging with pupils and in cases where pupils were against participating in PE and sport, the department did not go out of its way to address this; as a result, non-participation in PE and sport increased notably over the years.

### **Drivers towards equality-related action/initiatives taken**

The growing problems of low levels of participation in PE and sport by female pupils, together with the inadequacies of the PE department (in terms of size, offering and ability to engage with pupils), were extremely apparent to the school and were the primary drivers for taking action. Although stereotyping in sport also influenced the school’s equality-related work, this issue was not fully recognised until the overhaul of PE provision began. Similarly, a desire to improve sometimes low self-

esteem and confidence among female pupils across the school became further drivers, but only once the school realised that by taking action to address the initial problems, they could also influence other types of pupil outcomes.

The equality duties provided a framework within which the school challenged its thinking about how girls engage in PE and sport. For example, the gender duty guidance has helped them to think specifically about tackling preconceptions and stereotypes in sport. The gender duty also made it clear to the school that it was not providing its female pupils (in particular) with a good enough service and was not working hard enough to engage them. Finally, it also drove them to think about ensuring that sports provision is open and accessible no matter pupils' gender:

'One of our areas is tackling preconceptions and stereotypes and I guess what we were doing was stereotyping girls into girls reaching puberty and so they're not really bothered, and accepting that it should be the norm. They weren't even required to purchase a PE kit ... We were saying it's alright. Through the duties we recognised that it was just not alright. What we were doing was not providing what they needed to be engaged. And that has since had an impact on our teaching and learning ... The quality of teaching and learning in PE has improved and girls have re-engaged. And so have the boys.'

Assistant vice principal

### **The process and actions taken by the school to address these equality issues**

In the past year, the school has written up a detailed single equality plan. Although this plan has been developed in response to the community cohesion duty and not as a specific response to the gender in sport equality issues, the plan nonetheless does include specific coverage related to gender equality (as well as disability and race equality).

The first version of the single equality plan was developed without input from the school's stakeholders (pupils, parents and external agencies). However, following on from this early iteration of the plan, the school is engaging and seeking feedback from its stakeholders on the current version of this document. Stakeholders, including school governors, parents, the police and other external agencies are being asked to identify anything they believe is missing from the current version of the single equality plan and whether any content or action proposed needs enhancing.

'The plans are written, they've gone to the governors. Now it's about sharing these plans with the stakeholders to say this is what we want to do – does this fit in with your image of what we should be doing? Can we enhance anything or is there anything we should be adding to it? ... We'll then include the things that our stakeholders – our parents, the police, all of the agencies we work with – think we've missed or need enhanced.'

Assistant vice principal

The school has pursued a number of key activities in its efforts to tackle the causes and outcomes resulting from gender inequality in sport. One of the most significant areas of work conducted was in the development of a robust and valuable partnership with the local sports college. The partnership was established four years ago, by the then headteacher, and was specifically embarked upon in order to tackle the problems of an under-resourced PE department at the school and to address low levels of female participation in PE and sport. For example, to improve PE provision at the school, several members of staff from the local sports college now teach full-time in the school and the sports college continues to work directly with the school to ensure high-quality standards and to provide ongoing support.

Furthermore, the sports college has worked with the school to support a review of the PE curriculum provided, as well as the range and type of extracurricular activities offered by the school. The purpose of this

review was to enhance the range and quality of PE and sport provision and, in doing so, work towards ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils. Building on the expert advice and experience of the sports college, a range of new activities was introduced, designed not only to improve rates of participation by female pupils, but also to improve the quality and type of experience for all pupils (boys and girls). These have included a fitness gym and improved resources for dance to enable pupils to participate in more independent physical activity (particularly if they do not enjoy team sports), an out of school mountain biking club and a Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

‘Basically we tried to think outside of the box a little bit and move away from the more traditional sports and think about what other activities we could offer to the students. To that end we have a new fitness gym, with all the treadmills ... things that girls will take part in. We purchased some dance mats, spin bikes ... again all these activities are open to everyone and both male and female pupils want to take part.’

Director of learning for sport

All new activities are open to female and male pupils of all ages and care is taken to provide an open and safe environment (for example, to ensure that boys can take part in ‘non-traditional’ activities like dance without being teased). The school believes it is important to ensure stereotyping of sports does not take place so that pupils can enjoy any activities they are interested in.

‘All boys don’t like football. Some boys like to dance. So it’s about creating opportunities for pupils to feel safe – so boys can dance without aspersions being cast on their characters or being laughed at. It’s about making it a safe environment for them.’

Assistant vice principal

Through its partnership with the local sports college, the school has also enhanced its sports studies provision. For example, an initiative called

the Junior Health Trainer programme has been introduced. This was created by the school as part of the compulsory BTEC Sport qualification for Year 9 and 10 pupils and involves, among other things, leadership training. Pupils who have participated in this course have since developed leadership skills and the school believes that it has also helped to address low self-esteem and confidence. The school is in the process of getting the Junior Health Programme accredited and hopes to share it with other schools in the future.

‘They do the BTEC and also the Sport Apprenticeship which involves them going out into the community and doing work-based learning. They do a lot of leadership which obviously we found develops the students’ confidence and self-esteem. We also have a Junior Health Trainer programme that our BTEC students work towards which involves them working in the primary schools; they go in as role models for leading healthy lifestyles. Again we’ve got a fair split of both males and females taking part.’

Assistant vice principal

In addition to the ongoing work with the local sports college, the school has also consulted and worked in partnership with the local Primary Care Trust (PCT) and several local employers. For example, funding for the fitness gym was drawn down through the local PCT, and by liaising with local employers (such as leisure centres), the school has successfully expanded opportunities for its pupils to carry out work experience placements (for pupils studying the Modern Apprenticeship in Sport qualification).

‘We liaised with local employers so that through our Apprenticeship in Sports programme we’ve got work experience placements. We’ve broadened out our network of people who actually support the department in one shape or form.’

Assistant vice principal

## **Impact of the action taken to address the equality issues**

The school believes that its work on tackling inequality in sports provision has had a significant impact across the school, on both female *and* male pupils. With regards to female pupils, the most obvious impact for the school is the marked increase in female pupils' participation in sport, both in and out of school hours (including in sports studies qualifications). Although the school has not set or monitored targets here, it believes that observation and anecdotal evidence from pupils and staff is considerable enough to show there have been improvements. With regard to the new fitness gym, the school stated:

'We were getting not necessarily just your people who are sport mad and would do anything. We were getting people who've possibly never taken part in much sporting activity before because they could just come along and work by themselves and there wasn't that fear that if they were in a team they were letting someone down if they were making a mistake.'

Director of learning for sport

The school believes that the impact on female pupils as a result of improved sports provision has had a knock-on effect on other types of pupil outcomes – something they had not anticipated prior to taking action to address the problems. Female pupils are considered more confident within different subject areas and there are now more female 'pupil leaders' in school (including in subjects such as literacy and ICT):

'Those girls who previously didn't participate in sports tended not to participate throughout the school in anything else. And now we're seeing a greater take up by girls as leaders in other areas because of the leadership skills they've developed through the various leadership programmes in sports.'

Director of learning for sport

The school also believes that better alertness and concentration in class may be a result of more active and healthy lifestyles. Again, the school

believes that observation and anecdotal evidence is strong enough to show these impacts are linked to their action on sports provision. Additionally, although not formally tracked, the school believes it would be able to show a link between increased success in PE and increased success in other subjects by drawing on their pupil tracking data.

With regard to *all* pupils (female and male), research conducted with pupil apprentices and 'pupil leaders' in the school by Teeside University (as part of the Healthy Towns initiative) has revealed self-reported increases in confidence, self-esteem and leadership skills as a direct result of sports provision:

'The feedback that our students are giving to those researchers is all around the basics that the leadership work has helped them to have more self-confidence, to believe in themselves a little bit more ... they aspire to do things that perhaps before this, they wouldn't have dreamt of doing.'

Director of learning for sport

The school also believes that improved quality of teaching in PE has led to better engagement and healthier lifestyles for all pupils – and an environment where pupils are able to participate in what may be considered 'non-traditional' activities for their gender. Once again, these findings have not been measured, but are based on observation and pupil and staff feedback.

Due to the success of the school's action on sports provision, and in particular female participation in PE and sport, the school intends to continue its targeted approach to addressing inequality in sports participation the future. For example, focusing on pupils who do not currently participate in any physical activity and/or those who participate at an insufficient level, as well as looking at targeted action for pupils considered at risk of obesity; the school believes targeting these groups could contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of these pupils.



The PE department is now considered a leading department in the school, due to its effective overhaul and the impact this has had on pupil outcomes. Therefore, it is a department that others are encouraged to learn from, contributing to improved pupil outcomes in other subject areas. For example, the English department has been motivated to secure a library (which the school had never had) which provides dramatically improved reading opportunities in a school where pupils' literacy levels are a serious challenge.

### **Enablers and barriers**

The school's commitment to revitalising the PE department to ensure equality of opportunity and all-round better provision has been a key success factor. However, the partnership with the sports college has also been extremely important in encouraging and enabling the school to improve sports provision for all pupils; the enthusiasm of the new PE staff that have transferred from the sports college has been key in driving up pupil participation and reducing stereotyping in sports. The funding through the Healthy Towns initiative has also contributed to building up school resources – the introduction of the fitness gym has had a particularly positive impact on increasing pupils' participation in sport.

In terms of barriers, the school identified staff attitudes and funding as the two key issues. With regard to staff attitudes, the school found that it was difficult to convince the previous PE department that practices needed to change. Although one of the two original core staff remains with the school, it is felt that this barrier has now been overcome:

'With the one person left, seeing the improvements that have been made, she's come on board more with what we're doing. She's much more positive ... Initially, before [the partnership with the sport's college] it was kind of a constant battle with the girls to get them changed, to do anything. Now that barrier has been removed, because the girls come running through the door for sports lessons ... It's calmer and a much more pleasant

atmosphere to be in. And perhaps that member of staff also feels she now has support that she didn't have before.'

Assistant vice principal

Funding was also found to be a considerable barrier at the beginning of the initiative, as financing was needed for the sports college partnership and to pay new PE teachers while still honouring existing contracts (for example, teachers in other departments had previously run some PE lessons). Eventually the school managed to absorb costs – largely through funding and natural wastage – and this has ceased to be a significant problem. However, the school is concerned that funding will once again become a challenge in the future, particularly as a consequence of falling pupil numbers.

## **Equality duties and schools      CASE STUDY 5**

Using the equality duties to provide intensive English language support to improve Roma pupils' learning experience.

### **A description of the school**

This secondary school located in the East Midlands has a pupil population with an increasingly diverse ethnic minority mix. In the last 10 years, the school has experienced an influx of pupils from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and, more recently, arrivals from Poland and Romania. During this time the ethnic minority pupil population in the school has risen from a third to more than half.

### **A description of the equality issues facing the school**

Many migrant children who arrive at this school have low attainment in written and verbal English. In addition, Roma children can have limited previous experience of being in a school. A challenge for the school was to engage with parents and pupils and for all pupils to participate fully in school life and learning.

### **The process and actions taken by the school to address these equality issues**

In order to comply with local authority requests and in accordance with Ofsted guidelines, the school collects a wide range of data on equality groups which exist at the school. For example, the level of post-16 progression to further learning or employment, and GCSE examination results by ethnicity and gender.

The school acts on the duties by using this statistical data combined with qualitative information collected on their ethnic minority pupils to help them to better understand the learning and pastoral issues which affect the school's ethnic minority pupils. For example, results from the ethnic minority learning needs assessment helps them to set individual learning targets for improved subject and learning performance. Using findings from lesson observations, staff can also identify the challenges which

prevent ethnic minority pupils from participating in extracurricular activities and interacting with pupils outside of their own ethnic group.

The school's evidence base on ethnic minority groups, combined with the experience of other local schools in catering specifically for Roma pupils, led to a new intensive language support provision being offered to this group of young people. The support is provided to all Roma pupils from the local area. Thirteen schools collaborated, using shared resources and funding, to deliver a six-week intensive English language course. The aims are to develop pupils' level of English-speaking ability so that they are able to participate more fully in the learning curriculum and improve integration among the pupil population.

'It was an issue that was affecting several schools across [the area] particularly acutely. We already knew each other informally and would often talk shop when we met. We merely formalised these meetings to discuss the equality issues facing Roma students in our schools. This group served as an excellent basis to approach other schools across [the area].'

Headteacher

### **Impact of the action taken to address the equality issue(s)**

To measure the success of the targeted support, the school has recently collected new equality data (individual attainment data and structured observations by staff) on each Roma pupil who participated. Following analysis of this data the school has identified a variety of positive impacts. The intensive support provided through the English-speaking lessons has helped Roma pupils to more fully participate in learning and extracurricular activities. It has also meant the school is able to set more rigorous learning targets for Roma pupils. This has helped Roma pupils to progress more quickly to a higher learning level which ultimately the school expects will help to increase the school's academic performance overall. The school has also identified increased levels of confidence among these students and greater integration between different ethnic groups both in and out of school.

‘It’s been really effective in giving them a head start. When they enter the school now they are able from Day 1 to make friends with other students and participate in games, football, music and their classes. Across the school we’ve seen the levels of inclusion and performance of Roma students improve considerably.’

Headteacher

### **Key success factors**

The equality duties helped the school to introduce new ways to gather evidence, (using a combination of statistical and qualitative data), on particular equality groups who experience particular barriers in a new academic and social environment. Consultation and planning between schools on how to address the issue were also key success factors.

This joined-up approach allowed Roma pupils from across the local area to integrate more fully in learning and school life in general. It also meant resources were shared between schools to fund the specialist English lessons.

## **Equality duties and schools      CASE STUDY 6**

Using the equality duties to tackle bullying, to increase pupil achievement and participation.

### **A description of the school**

Located in a rural area of Wales, this large mixed comprehensive caters for c.1,400 pupils aged between 11 and 19. The linguistic background of learners is mixed. While over 400 pupils study Welsh as a first language, over 90 per cent of pupils come from homes where English is the first language. Around 15 per cent of pupils are in receipt of free school meals which is slightly above the average for the unitary authority (UA). A relatively high number of pupils enter the school with additional learning needs.

### **A description of the equality issues facing the school**

The equality issue the school sought to tackle was all forms of bullying (including cyber bullying via social networking sites) and discrimination. Although not widespread within the school, the school believes these issues can have a negative impact on the wellbeing and social and emotional development of all pupils, and – in turn – a negative impact on pupil outcomes, for example, educational achievement and participation in lessons and extracurricular activities.

The emotional and social development of all pupils is a key priority for the school but it also focuses its attention on particular stages in pupils' learning journey, for example in Year 7 and during Key Stage 4. The school's intake of Year 7 pupils is drawn from around 25 very small feeder schools across a wide rural area. As a result, the school sought to tackle equality-related issues associated with adjusting to life within a large secondary school. In particular, the school's pastoral team aimed to tackle both real and perceived isolation among pupils, pupil vulnerability and bullying. In terms of Key Stage 4 pupils, the school has suffered from a high level of non-attendance which was believed to stem

from pupils' unhappiness with school life, and especially their experiences of bullying and discrimination.

### **Drivers towards equality-related action/initiatives taken**

The school stated that the primary driver for its equality-related work stems from its duty of care for all pupils. However, the duties have provided a framework within which the school believes it can check that it is carrying out its responsibilities for pupil welfare and equality correctly. In accordance with these responsibilities the school has been tackling issues such as bullying to improve the social and emotional development of all pupils.

'The formal requirements of the duties don't really influence our day-to-day practice. That day-to-day practice would be in place if those duties hadn't been passed down to us at all. Because the day-to-day practice is based on our duty of care which has always been there before [the] formal legislation ... Under the duty of care we would make sure that we are formulating policies and tackling issues such as around discrimination and bullying.'

Headteacher

Recognition by the school of the ways in which emotional instability impacts on pupils, for example, less engagement, poor attendance and low attainment were also cited as key reasons for the school tackling bullying and discrimination.

### **The process and actions taken by the school to address these equality issues**

In order to tackle bullying and how this has an impact upon pupil outcomes, the school has undertaken a number of initiatives. For example, due to the growth of technology-based cyber-bullying (identified by pupils and feedback to the headteacher by heads of year), the school reviewed and updated its anti-bullying strategy.

‘They are improving the policies all the time; they are always bringing in new things to make the school environment smoother. Like the anti-bullying strategy or instead of excluding pupils they include them.’

Year 12 pupil, member of the student council

In order to support the review of the anti-bullying strategy, the school’s headteacher attended a number of training sessions, delivered by the local authority and a local university, and designed to develop a better understanding of cyber-bullying. The training enabled the headteacher (who is also head of pastoral support) to develop a more in-depth understanding of, for example, ways to tackle it, such as mediation work with pupils so that posted video content is removed. The training also equipped the school with the knowledge to redraft the strategy so that it set out the key features of cyber-bullying and how this new form of bullying relates to criminal law. The revised strategy ensures that all staff members are able to identify incidents of cyber-bullying and discuss its impact with pupils and parents. Internal feedback was also sought from the school’s student council to ensure the strategy reflected how young people experience and use new forms of social media.

The new updated strategy is a seven-page document which starts with a statement on why it is important to tackle all forms of bullying ‘so pupils can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere’. The strategy defines all forms of bullying (for example, emotional, racial and homophobic) and lists actions taken around reported bullying incidents, for example, working with parents, support for victims and support/ disciplinary measures for perpetrators. The strategy also describes the symptoms and signs of bullying to increase awareness among staff. One of the strategy’s key messages, promoted to the whole school community, is the fact that the school is ‘a telling school’.

If bullying does occur, all pupils should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a



TELLING school. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff.

Source: anti-bullying strategy

The 'telling' policy places an expectation on the whole community to report bullying if they suspect it has taken place. The school believes that by reinforcing the 'telling' message it removes the stigma among pupils of being labelled 'a snitch'; most reported incidents of bullying are pupil-referred. The headteacher felt this implied that pupils feel both safe and comfortable in reporting sensitive issues to members of staff.

A great deal of effort has been invested by the school to communicate the importance of the anti-bullying strategy and in particular, the 'telling' policy. With regards to the latter, the school felt that there was a strong need to reassure pupils that it was a good thing to report bullying and that they shouldn't be afraid to do so. This message, alongside the other key elements of the anti-bullying strategy, have been communicated to pupils and staff alike through various platforms, including lessons (the curriculum), school assemblies and using a permanent poster campaign in every part of the building.

'We work hard at trying to reassure pupils. Pupils are really frightened that if they tell a teacher then things will get worse. One of the battles we have got is to reassure pupils and we do this during assemblies and lots of other ways. What you find is that most are self-referrals and pupils know we will check every incident out.'

Headteacher

'Almost 99 per cent of students will know about the bullying strategy and the code of conduct. It's in every classroom.'

Year 9 pupil

‘We have anti-bullying policies and a code of conduct all over the school - in every single room - so it’s very clear to all pupils and it’s always talked about in assemblies.’

Year 9 pupil

Many of the school’s Year 7 intake is drawn from very small feeder schools in rural areas. In order to identify any challenges some pupils may have in adjusting to a large comprehensive, the school’s pastoral work starts before pupils arrive in the secondary school. This work aims to provide a smooth transition so that all pupils benefit from a safe and secure learning environment in which they can fulfil their academic potential. The school’s headteacher decided some years ago that visiting all feeder schools was worthwhile and would ultimately have a positive impact on pupil outcomes. For example, by identifying ‘potential aggressors or anyone who is vulnerable’ at the start of Year 6, the school is able to ensure that a ‘safety net’ is in place following transition from primary school to the secondary school. The proactive work the school takes in identifying potential pastoral issues prior to the child attending the secondary school has been praised by Estyn:

‘Transitional links with feeder schools are effective. Teachers and support staff visit all primary schools to ensure appropriate pastoral and curricular support.’

Estyn inspection report, 2008

As pupils make their transition from primary to secondary school, Year 7 pupils are taught (during PSHE lessons) to understand the difference between bullying and ‘an argument between friends’. The school believes this helps pupils to identify when they or other pupils are experiencing bullying and consequently enables pupils to alert the school to incidences of bullying.

Historically, proven incidents of bullying resulted in some type of disciplinary action for the perpetrator, and often this took the form of exclusion from school. However, more recently the school has been

keen to avoid excluding pupils from the school environment and has sought to put in place alternative disciplinary and remedial action. For example, rather than exclude a pupil, the bully is now supported in the school's Inclusion Unit (set up over the last three years), where support workers help the pupil to consider how they have treated the victim. The support workers also set targets in order to monitor improvements in the perpetrator's future behaviour. Furthermore, by avoiding exclusion, the pupil is able to keep up with the curriculum which reduces the risk of further disaffection on their return to school.

'This [the Inclusion Unit] has reduced the level of incidents of bullying because we have changed our response. Previously our exclusion was really quite high because we operated a zero-tolerance strategy but we have moved away from this. We respond in a different way: rather than excluding we place them in the inclusion unit. That way you are not excluding them from school, you have access to them and can address aspects of their behaviour.'

Headteacher

'A few years ago, instead of suspending people they included them and talk about what is going wrong in their lessons and why they are behaving so badly to kind of work through problems and to try and find a solution rather than go home saying there's a three-day break from school. I think there are less pupils who are expelled completely from school, last year there were no exclusions or maybe one so it's obviously helped that but it's helped the people that would be excluded to get on better in lessons and get more from school.'

Year 10 pupil

The school has also introduced a number of peer support initiatives they hoped would have an impact on the emotional and social development of pupils and ultimately on their achievement, attainment and

participation. Two peer projects were introduced: Pupils Always Listening (PALs) and the Lunch Time Friends (LTF) scheme.

The school's pastoral team introduced the PALs initiative as it sought to build on its transitional work undertaken with Year 6 pupils in primary schools. By providing a pupil peer support initiative it was hoped that the new intake would feel more secure in the new learning environment by, for example, developing friendship groups and/or providing a communication channel for reporting any bullying incidents.

PALs involves Year 8 and 9 pupils volunteering to mentor Year 7 pupils who may feel isolated following their transition from feeder schools, or more generally, any pupils who do not feel happy, secure or comfortable within their new school environment.

'They trained us up then put us in chairs facing each other, one was to be a PAL and we were told how to listen. It helped us to communicate with pupils who may feel scared.'

Year 9 pupil.

PALs are easily recognised around the school as they are issued with a different tie from other pupils. To ensure accessibility to PALs, the school has arranged for PALs to be attached to each form class and twice a week during lunchtime they hold a kind of 'pupil surgery'.

'We have specific days where we go round and visit specific forms, we go there every morning and hang around, and then we have it in classrooms twice a week. We like it, we meet new people and help different people, we learn how to communicate.'

Year 9 pupil.

One PAL recalled a time when the friend of a Year 7 pupil (who had been a victim of bullying) felt more comfortable in approaching them as opposed to a member of staff. Having understood the details of the

incident, the PAL and victim jointly agreed the issue would be reported to a member of staff.

‘A girl said to me that her friend was being bullied and she found it easier to approach us instead of a teacher. Then we went to tell a teacher together.’

Year 9 pupil (PAL)

The LTF project involves Year 12 pupils providing advice and guidance during lunchtimes to Year 10 and 11 pupils who experience academic and/or pastoral problems. Students who expressed an interest in becoming mentors were given two days’ training provided by a Red Cross youth worker in which they learned about and practised mentoring skills.

Prior to the Red Cross youth worker’s involvement in the LTF initiative, they worked in the school providing emotional and financial support and guidance to young carers. Because some of the support offered to young carers was about bullying, the school felt that the Red Cross would be ideally suited in helping some other pupils become peer mentors to pupils with similar problems at school.

‘Young carers tend to feel very different from other pupils. They tend to be very mature in some ways but not very streetwise and come across as oddballs to other kids. Because of this they are prone to being bullied. We felt that by training up other pupils in some of the things we do then any young person could go and have a chat.’

Red Cross youth worker

Pupils involved in the LTF project consider themselves the ‘eyes and ears’ of the school and are able to identify equality-related issues that may be hidden to staff and adults. The headteacher believes that the LTF works well because it is delivered by sixth form students and their seniority within the school helps it get accepted among other students.

‘I was really pleased with it because they give up their own time and they have to give up their own lunchtimes. I think we will have to work hard in ensuring it’s not branded as “that’s where the saddoes go”. So maybe because its run by sixth formers, that’s how we will combat that.’

Headteacher

In order to provide strong communication channels between staff and pupils about pastoral issues, the school has developed (over the last five years) an internal system in which senior members of the pastoral team (head of year, assistant head of year and year manager) stay with the same year group (from Year 7 to Year 11). The school believes that this same point of contact ensures effective relationships are created in which pupils are more able to communicate with staff about a range of pastoral or academic issues.

‘The pastoral team goes to meet pupils in Year 6 and will go all the way through with them from Year 7 up to the end of Year 11. What that means then is the pastoral team is a constant point of contact. It’s a very good device for tackling bullying because you know who the kids are that are likely to be bullies and who the vulnerable pupils are; you get to know the pupils very well in this way.’

Headteacher

The headteacher felt such a system, while operationally more expensive than if the senior staff did not progress with each year group, had several advantages. For instance, the long-standing pupil and teacher relationships help to build trust between the teacher and parents and therefore facilitates stronger communication because the parents know who to go to about any educational or pastoral issue affecting their child. This also helps the school to better understand barriers which can exist outside school that could have an impact on pupils’ ability to achieve. It also means that staff better understand the needs of their pupils because the typical ‘settling in’ period is not required.

### **Impact of the action taken to address the equality issue(s)**

The actions and initiatives taken by the school were intended to ensure all pupils have access to and experience a safe and secure (that is, free from bullying) learning environment which allows them to develop emotionally and socially and ultimately reach their potential in terms of achievement, attainment and participation.

‘What we aim to do is make pupils secure so that hopefully this has a knock-on effect on pupil outcomes. If they have a secure environment then they can achieve academically and socially as well. Anecdotal evidence from pupils and parents shows it’s working. Our exam results are the hard evidence, we have performed very well.’

Headteacher

The school’s work in this area has been independently assessed by Estyn during its most recent inspection in 2008, with inspectors noting that:

‘Pupils’ behaviour is outstanding. Their self-discipline makes an important contribution to the standards they achieve in their learning. There is an orderly atmosphere in the school and pupils understand the high expectations the school has of them. Pupils are courteous and tolerant. There are very few incidents of bullying and aggressive behaviour.’

Estyn inspection report, 2008

The school’s headteacher felt that to set quantifiable targets for its pastoral work is difficult due to the wide range of initiatives delivered in the school. However, anecdotal evidence from beneficiaries of the PALs and LTFs initiatives suggests this new kind of pastoral support has helped pupils to feel emotionally secure during key stages of their learning journey, especially following the transition from primary school.

‘The school is really friendly. I found it easy to settle in when I first came. People were friendly and helped me out in my early days.’  
Year 11 pupil

In addition, analysis conducted by the school of some of the key measures it hoped to affect has shown some positive impact. For example, an increase in Year 11 attendance from 85 to 91 per cent indicates the pastoral support and especially the LTF mentoring scheme has had a positive impact on learning participation. The school believes the increased attendance also had a knock-on effect on the Key Stage 4 attainment levels, which have increased from low to mid-60s for five A\*-C GCSEs.

In terms of bullying, the number of external exclusions has reduced as the school sought to manage behavioural issues through its internal Inclusion Unit. Several members of the student council believed that the changes which have been made are enabling disruptive students (particularly those involved in bullying) to feel more included in school and therefore achieve more from their learning.

‘Last year there was only one exclusion. I suppose the Inclusion Unit has helped people to get on better in lessons and to get more from school.’  
Year 11 pupil, member of the student council

Pupil participation in school life has also improved; for example, more than 70 of this year’s 240 Year 9 pupils volunteered for the PALs project compared with 20 volunteers in the previous year. In addition, the school had the largest number of pupils express an interest in taking part in the student council elections.

Although difficult to prove, the school believes that the success of the pupil-led schemes such as PALs and LTF have also contributed to an increase in pupil participation in lunchtime and after school extracurricular activities. The school had anecdotal feedback that



pupils are now happier, more confident and as a result more motivated to learn and become involved in activities outside the curriculum. Recent beneficiaries of the PALS scheme (Year 8 pupils) reported that opportunities to get involved in lunchtime and after-school activities were the best things about the school.

Pupils at the school feel that they now 'have a voice', meaning that they feel well-represented and supported (for example, by heads of year and their peers) and that communication channels (for example, mentoring schemes) and opportunities existed for them to raise issues with staff. Many pupils felt they were also confident that reported issues would be acted on by the school. Following the most recent inspection, Estyn reported that:

'The school council is an effective way of ensuring that pupils and students have a voice in school affairs.'

Estyn inspection report, 2008

Many pupils felt that the school's anti-bullying message and other pastoral related initiatives have increased their understanding about 'difference'. In addition to understanding about race, equality and disability, pupils reported that socially constructed differences categorised through terminology such as 'chavs, emos, nerds, weirdos, popular, sporty, cool kids, and normal' were commonly discussed during peer-to-peer sessions. Overall, many pupils felt that the reduction in the level of bullying is linked to improved understanding about 'difference' among pupils. One Year 10 pupil commented that this facilitated a friendlier environment which positively affected their achievement.

'The fact that the environment is so friendly helps us in our learning and must be partly due to how well it [the anti-bullying strategy and code of conduct] has been broadcast.'

Year 10 pupil

## **Enablers**

The school's capacity to allocate additional financial resources to support the new system of having the same head of year progress through the school with the same pupil year group is considered a key success factor. Allocating resources to this new system has meant that the head of year is able to track pupils from start to finish (Year 7 to Year 11), developing closer relationships and a better understanding of the issues affecting these pupils through their learning journey.

Developing closer relations and improved partnership working with the local feeder schools is also considered to have enabled a more effective approach to managing pastoral care at the secondary school. Clear and open communication with the feeder schools has helped the secondary school to identify vulnerable pupils as well as potential aggressors and subsequently allowed the school to set up a 'safety net' in advance of new pupil intakes.

The training received by the headteacher on new forms of bullying was critical in helping the school to update its anti-bullying strategy. The training ensured that the school's approach to and understanding of bullying was up-to-date and was appropriate to young people's lives today.

Finally, the expansion of the mentoring programme was largely due to the commitment and expertise provided to the school by the Red Cross. By working with external agencies, the school has been able to properly equip pupils with the skills to participate in and effectively deliver the mentoring schemes.

## **Primary schools**

7. Using the equality duties to adapt learning resources and teaching practices to enhance the learning experience and to better engage pupils with learning and physical disabilities.
8. Using evidence and monitoring tools to track pupil achievement and participation in school activities, and develop new ways of engaging with parents of ethnic minority pupils to address lower levels of participation in PE lessons.

## **Equality duties and schools      CASE STUDY 7**

Using the equality duties to adapt learning resources and teaching practices to enhance the learning experience and to better engage pupils with learning and physical disabilities.

### **A description of the school**

This primary school is based in central London and serves a relatively affluent area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. The vast majority of pupils come from a variety of ethnic minority backgrounds and 86 per cent of pupils have English as an additional language.

### **A description of the equality issues facing the school**

In comparison with other mainstream schools, the number of pupils with learning difficulties and mild physical impairments is higher than the national average. Some of the pupil population have a statement of educational need, visual, auditory, physical impairments and mental difficulties. As such, equality-related issues existed which prevented some pupils from accessing a mainstream learning curriculum and extracurricular activities, participating in school life, and achieving better exam performance.

### **The process and actions taken by the school to address these equality issues**

The school continually tracks the progress of all disabled students to identify ways in which their needs can be more fully met. In response to the equality duties, the school seeks to provide the same learning experience as that for non-disabled pupils. The school began by undertaking a mapping exercise of a disabled pupils' learning journey to understand how key contact points could be improved. Members of the senior leadership team, inclusion staff and teaching staff met to consult with disabled pupils and their parents to develop a more in-depth understanding of the pupils' wants and aspirations. Staff then combined

this information with individual academic data to design a series of initiatives targeted on SEN or disabled pupils.

To be able to deliver some of the specialist support, the school worked closely with the local authority in order to gain additional funding and identify experts who then visited the school to deliver advice and capacity-building training to some staff. The funding from the local authority has helped to pump-prime the initiatives made available to all disabled pupils and pupils with impairments in the school. However, the school has been able to mainstream all of the activities by making cost savings in other non-essential areas.

The school's support aims to remove barriers which may prevent pupils with disabilities from participating in other mainstream schools. Due to the wide range of disability-related issues that some pupils experience, the school responded by introducing more inclusive teaching practices, enhancing the skills of some existing staff, employing additional staff and purchasing specialist equipment.

'Where possible we bring in support from the outside, not just to support the young person but also to train our staff. This way we are able to continue their support after the external support worker has left.'

Deputy headteacher

In terms of teaching style, teachers are observed by a member of the senior leadership team once a week, which the school believes is more than would happen in other mainstream schools. This ensures subject teaching is differentiated so that less able pupils are able to participate more fully in learning tasks. The school has added additional classroom support, using funding provided by the local authority, by employing an extra five classroom assistants who offer one-to-one support during academic and physical education learning.

The school also provides specially adapted learning materials (for example, large font worksheets and ICT) so that visually impaired pupils are able to work towards the same learning objectives as their peers. For pupils who have a hearing impairment, the school has improved the acoustics by redesigning some of its classrooms.

To increase participation in sports-related activities among pupils with mild physical impairments, the school has also funded a 'train-the-trainer' session. The activity involved a physiotherapist visiting the school on six occasions to build capacity among the classroom assistants. This has meant that classroom assistants are able to provide basic physiotherapy to pupils at the time it is needed. This allows such pupils to take a more active role in a variety of sports they would otherwise not have been able to and helps their wellbeing.

### **Impact of the action taken to address the equality issue(s)**

To measure the impact of the additional support on pupil outcomes the school uses the Every Child Matters (ECM) framework. The school also receives regular feedback from parents and those children receiving the support to understand how it makes a difference to their learning and their lives away from school. The school believes that this 360-degree approach to collecting evidence has shown that all ECM indicators for pupils benefitting from the support have been increased.

'It's important to look at the whole child. To look at every aspect of their school and home lives: their learning, their friends and social networks, and their parents and teachers. This way you have a good understanding of the child and their motivation for taking part in the intervention. Finding out what motivates them is key to their engagement and success or failure of the intervention.'

Deputy headteacher

Feedback collected from parents and pupils suggests that one of the key benefits from the additional support is that children with a range of impairments can be educated at a mainstream school rather than

attending a special school. Among the local community, the school now has an established reputation for supporting pupils with a range of impairments. Evidence collected by the school also suggests that redesigned delivery and additional support during subject lessons has increased participation in learning for these pupils more generally. The school has also observed a greater degree of socialisation between 'able and less able' students. The school also benefits from a pool of classroom assistants who are now able to provide basic physiotherapy rather than buying in specialist help. Finally, following parental engagement, parents of disabled pupils are now more involved in the running of extracurricular activities.

### **Success factors**

The school emphasised the importance of having a transparent partnership with the local authority, disability experts, staff, parents and pupils. This has helped the school to secure additional funding, receive the right type of guidance at the right time, build trust with parents, and understand the learning needs and aspirations of pupils with a learning difficulty or disability. By undertaking this process, the school believes its interventions are more successful and cost-effective.

## **Equality duties and schools      CASE STUDY 8**

Using evidence and monitoring tools to track pupil achievement and participation in school activities, and develop new ways of engaging with parents of ethnic minority pupils to address lower levels of participation in PE lessons.

### **A description of the school**

This urban primary school has a pupil population of 300. The catchment area is fairly affluent, with average household income just above the national average. Half of the pupils live in the ward where the school is located, half live outside in more deprived areas. Boys and girls are represented more or less equally within the school. A third of the pupils are from ethnic minority groups, largely of Bangladeshi and Eastern European origin, and in total pupils speak 20 different languages. Although the number of pupils attending the school remains consistent, there is a high degree of 'churn', with large numbers of pupils joining and leaving the school in any one year.

The school was graded as 'satisfactory' in its most recent Ofsted inspection, in November 2009. Equality featured in this inspection and the school was graded 'good' in the areas of race and disability equality.

### **A description of the equality issues facing the school**

The school has experienced lower take-up of sports by ethnic minority pupils than the average, mainly among children of Bangladeshi origin.

The school had concerns that the school uniform prescribed for sport lessons did not take account of parental views – influenced by their cultural and religious beliefs – for an appropriate dresscode. The school was unsure what parents believed the importance of school sports to be, what any barriers might be, and whether they understood the legal requirement for pupils to take part.



The school identified a clear need for better communication between the school and parents of ethnic minority pupils to discuss the requirements of both parties. However, the school had in the past found it difficult to engage parents in consultation (through parents' evenings for example).

### **The process and actions taken by the school to address these equality issues**

The equality duties have helped the school to introduce a more thorough system of collecting evidence about its equality groups. Although the school collected evidence prior to the introduction of the equality duties, current mechanisms include regular tracking of educational participation and attainment among the whole pupil population, use of pupil attitude surveys, the discussion of equality issues during school council meetings and wider consultations with community groups in the area. Some of this evidence is then benchmarked with comparable data provided by community improvement partnerships.

By carefully monitoring the number of pupils taking part in sports activities within the school and by analysing the data by a range of pupil profiles, including ethnicity, the school has been able to identify the issue of low take-up of sport lessons among some ethnic minority pupils. The school has also approached a local Bangladeshi group to discuss the issues more generally.

The school has used these insights to update its race equality scheme and action plan. By embedding the action plan (which covers the three areas of race, disability and gender) within the School Development Plan, the school ensures that it delivers on its actions and that equality issues are not moved down the agenda.

'When documents are separate they can start to conflict and actions can be pushed down the agenda ... The School Development Plan has an existing cycle, which is well-embedded already so it is a better place for it.'

Senior leader

One action taken is to encourage parents of ethnic minority pupils to come into school and also to provide teachers with an opportunity to informally discuss sports lessons and sports kit with them, for example, during a Community Day or school fete.

‘There was an agenda there to speak to ethnic minority parents that we don’t normally see ... it [the Community Day] did have a great big agenda but there was also that theme running through it from our School Development Plan to make sure that everyone recognises the importance of school sport, how we can help them, if the girls want to wear leggings under their gym skirts, that’s fine, we can accommodate that.’

Senior leader

The school’s community cohesion coordinator led the organisation of the Community Day and was helped by other members of staff. Community groups got involved by running stalls, and the local authority’s cycling group took part to promote school sports, one of the central themes of the day. The school ensured high attendance by asking local community support officers to arrange for the emergency services to take part.

In order to raise awareness of the fete among ethnic minority parents specifically and to encourage them to attend on the day, the school invited parents to run stalls linked to their ethnicity. It also ran a competition among all pupils to design a poster for the Community Day. Where appropriate, ethnic minority pupils were encouraged to include writing in their own language and to actively involve their parents by asking them to check the spelling.

### **Impact of the action taken to address the equality issue(s)**

The primary purpose of the work undertaken by the school through the planning and delivery of the Community Day was to encourage pupils and their parents, particularly those of ethnic minority origin, to better understand the requirements for children to participate in PE lessons at

school, as well as to find a way of reaching out and engaging with parents, understanding their perspectives.

The primary outcome of the action taken by the school has been an increase in participation in school PE lessons by ethnic minority pupils. Although it is impossible to say that the Community Day and the activities leading up to the day contributed solely to the increase, attendance records for PE lessons have shown a 16 percentage point increase in attendance/participation by ethnic minority pupils.

In addition, the involvement of pupils and parents in the Community Day has enabled the school to begin to improve how it communicates with parents of ethnic minority pupils. Now that the school has established some forms of communication with these parents, it hopes to build on this further in the future to ensure that both ethnic minority pupils and their parents are able to participate more fully in school life.

### **The key success factors**

The equality duties have enabled the school to introduce a more thorough system of collecting evidence about its equality groups and to improve their action-planning. The school is due to rewrite its equality policies at the start of the next academic year and intends to apply the lessons it has already learnt, including the need to consult much more widely outside of the school, both to ensure that it is identifying equality issues effectively and also to inform its action planning.

‘[The formal process informed by the equality duties] has led to a plan, a plan that we could go back to and look at and say “right, what can we do better next time?” It’s given us a structure to build on.’

Senior leader

The Community Day has been a success due to the commitment of the teachers, particularly the community cohesion coordinator who organised the event in her free time. The presence of the emergency

services at the event was effective at increasing attendance at the event generally, while asking parents of ethnic minority pupils to run stalls ensured attendance by this group. Holding a community-based event has enabled the school to meet parents of ethnic minority pupils that they would normally seldom see. The school believes that this informal contact will encourage parents to better engage with more formal school activities, such as parents' evenings, in the future.

## **Special schools**

9. Using the disability equality duty to provide extra academic and social opportunities in a special school.
  
10. Using the equality duties to tackle stereotyping in disabled pupils' learning.
  
11. Using the equality duties to develop a faith garden which helps to address racial tension and improve understanding of disability within the school and local community.
  
12. Using the equality duties to develop an equality action plan and using this to identify new ways of improving communication among children with speech impairments.

## **Equality duties and schools      CASE STUDY 9**

Using the disability equality duty to provide extra academic and social opportunities in a special school.

### **A description of the school**

This is a special school which caters for learners with complex needs and a range of disabilities. Pupils are drawn mainly from an inner-city catchment area and come from a range of ethnic backgrounds, with most of white British origin. A few pupils speak English as an additional language. The school caters for students aged between seven and 19, and currently has 85 students.

Following its most recent inspection, Ofsted reported that all students, regardless of their needs, background or ability, achieve well. Although standards are well below the national average, students attain well in relation to their individual learning targets. The vast majority attain Entry Level and Awards Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) qualifications.

### **A description of the equality issues facing the school**

Pupils in the school have a range of medium to severe learning difficulties and disabilities. For example, health conditions, speech and language issues, and visual, physical and mental impairments. The school's vision is to tackle societal discrimination which disabled people can experience during their adult lives. The school seeks to do this by offering opportunities which are readily available to pupils in mainstream schools.

‘We do everything possible to ensure that our pupils regardless of their disability can be included as fully in adult life as possible. That means putting equality into practice. In order to do that we started to deliver a more challenging curriculum which in some ways exceeds what is delivered in mainstream schools.’

Headteacher

## **The process and actions taken by the school to address these equality issues**

The school has implemented an equality action plan. The action plan sets out two key priorities to enable pupils to fulfil their learning aspirations and provide the best opportunities to help them succeed in their adult lives.

The school's first priority is to deliver a challenging curriculum which is tailored to each pupil's needs and aspirations in order to drive individual academic success. Although Ofsted reported that pupils in this school achieve well, pupils indicated they wanted the opportunity to sit more challenging examinations - which they felt would benefit their progression from school. The second priority focuses on empowering pupils to make decisions on the type of provision that would help them to meet their aspirations, with the school allowing pupils to make choices about almost all of the actions to be taken.

The school has found that pupils want their learning experiences to match that found in mainstream schools.

'We let the kids make their own choices. If given the opportunity they will express what they want. And what they want is an experience which gives them the life opportunities that a pupil in the mainstream would receive.'

Headteacher

In terms of academic improvement, the school establishes a baseline of ability, needs, barriers and aspirations for each pupil. Teaching staff then set a target for every pupil to achieve an increase of one learning level in each term. At the end of each term, all teaching staff undertake an individual pupil evaluation to report on pupil progression. The school reported this process does require a significant amount of planning by teachers. As a result, the school has employed more teaching staff so that existing staff have a reduced timetable. This gives teachers the time to develop individual learning targets for each pupil.

In order to assess the impact of actions and initiatives taken, the school has built on existing methods of evaluation. For example, more regular and structured lesson observations by members of the senior leadership team, individual lesson and pupil evaluations combined with bi-monthly pupil consultations have helped the school do this.

This evidence also helps the school to identify additional support which a pupil may need to progress academically and prepare for their adult life. For example, through new partnerships with other local learning providers, pupils can now work towards subjects not delivered at the special school, such as a vocational or ICT qualification.

Involving pupils in deciding how provision is delivered is the second key priority within the school's action plan. Feedback from a pupil consultation exercise saw the school expand existing provision in response to reported pupil demand. For example, the after-school club has been expanded from two to four days a week, with the support of partner organisations and parents. The school has also provided more school excursions to meet the demand for improved life and functional skills. For instance, pupils have made visits to a local library, bank and post office.

### **Impact of the action taken to address the equality issue(s)**

The headteacher believes that improved pupil outcomes (for example, academic attainment) can be realised if pupils feel part of the school. For instance, by involving pupils in deciding how resources are spent. Following the introduction of the actions described above, the school has identified a wide range of positive impacts for their pupils.

An analysis of academic attainment evidence has identified that for the first time in the school's history, some pupils have been able to sit and achieve GCSE qualifications. School management information indicates improved attendance, while teachers have reported increased levels of engagement. Anecdotal evidence and feedback from pupils also suggests learners are happier and have more fun during school.



In particular those students who have participated in after-school clubs and attend other learning provision feel more confident and prepared for life after school. Furthermore, the external provision now offered by linking up with other schools has meant that pupils can access a broader curriculum than that offered at their school, and socialise with pupils from mainstream learning providers.

The school's headteacher also wished to understand how its performance in regard to the pupil outcomes being monitored (as part of the action plan) compared with those of other comparable schools. To benchmark itself against others, the school carried out its own research, with a sample of schools with a pupil profile broadly comparable with its own. The research found that in almost all cases the school outperforms the others to which it has compared itself against.

### **The key success factors**

Based on its previous inspection findings the school felt that it performed well in terms of preparing pupils for their transition from learning into adult life. However, the headteacher felt that the equality duties have helped the school 'to create a level-playing field' for pupils in the school.

'Because the duties have legally enshrined pupils' rights, our organisation and staff go that extra mile to add value to their experiences during their time with us. So we add value in terms of their academic progress, life skills, and happiness. But the key one for us is their social interaction with people outside from the school. We want our kids to lead what some might call a normal life – they have that right.'

Headteacher

The key successes were attributed to staff working very hard to provide the individualised target setting and monitoring. Secondly, because pupils now have the opportunity to decide where some of the school's resources should be targeted they are now more motivated to achieve in their learning. Finally, the school believes there needs to be a clear and

strong message from the top about how the school seeks to address equality issues.

## **Equality duties and schools      CASE STUDY 10**

Using the equality duties to tackle stereotyping in disabled pupils' learning.

### **A description of the school**

This special school caters for learners, aged 11 to 19, with severe learning difficulties. Many students also exhibit associated difficulties, including autistic spectrum disorders, challenging behaviour and communication difficulties. A minority of pupils have complex needs; some pupils require medical intervention, such as tube-feeding.

The school caters for 95 pupils who are predominantly drawn from an inner-city area in north west England; a very high proportion of learners are entitled to free school meals. Students come from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds, but the large majority are of white British origin and the majority speak English as their first language. Due to the gender bias in developing syndromes, in particular autism, around two-thirds of all pupils are male.

### **A description of the equality issues facing the school**

The school's headteacher has worked within special schools for more than 15 years and feels that some special schools and other providers who work with disabled pupils tend to 'wrap pupils in cotton wool' and stereotype their learning experience, for example, an over-reliance on classroom-based learning. The headteacher felt that, as a result, disabled pupils are at risk of being unintentionally excluded from learning opportunities offered to mainstream pupils, such as nationally recognised and accredited vocational learning. In order to tackle this potential for exclusion among disabled pupils, the school sought to review and deliver a non-stereotyped learning experience. In order to achieve this, the school aimed to promote non-traditional curriculum choices, for example, vocational subjects. By adding vocational subjects to the existing curriculum, the school felt this would result in improved

pupil outcomes, for instance, equipping pupils with work-focused skills that could improve their employment opportunities.

### **Drivers towards equality-related action/initiatives taken**

A combination of the equality duties and the cooperation and commitment from school staff have driven the school to introduce new curriculum initiatives, in particular, vocational learning for disabled pupils. Due to the severity of disability, pupils are unlikely ever to achieve the target of five A\*-C grades at Key Stage 4. Therefore, the school felt that vocational learning would enable its pupils to achieve more personally appropriate outcomes by developing their life and functional skills.

‘In some ways we are struggling to think about what else we can do. But again it’s looking at new things that we hadn’t done before. The duties give us a prompt to make sure we are doing as much as we can.’

Headteacher

The steps taken in revisiting current provision is most clearly evidenced in the school’s work around broadening the Key Stage 4 curriculum, in particular offering vocational learning opportunities to disabled pupils for the first time. The school’s headteacher felt that learning for disabled pupils can be ‘dull, boring and child-like’ and by providing a work-focused curriculum (vocational learning below Level 1) the school hoped to give a clear indication that students ‘are able to access life chances during their later lives’.

These priorities also supported the pupils’ desire for an alternative learning and accreditation experience. Following consultation with its pupils, the school learned that many of them wanted formal learning certification which their siblings would typically get from mainstream education. Up to that point the school, due to the ability of pupils, delivered a mix of unaccredited provision, for example, the Duke of

Edinburgh Award Scheme and/or P scales.<sup>2</sup> The feedback from pupils showed that disabled pupils wanted 'evidence (certification) which showed they had the ability to achieve in similar vocational subjects'.

### **The process and actions taken by the school to address these equality issues**

The school's work in introducing vocational learning began with the senior leadership team conducting a review of the existing disability equality action plan, to which the aim of improving pupil outcomes through vocational learning was added. The fact that the aim to increase the future life chances of disabled pupils was embedded in the school's equality action plan and cross-referenced with the School Development Plan gave the vocational learning initiative a higher profile within the school. It believes that having equality-related actions communicated in this way has empowered staff to be more open in tackling equality issues, contribute ideas on how to improve practice and challenge the status quo especially among local vocational learning providers.

In order to kickstart the vocational learning programme, the school's deputy head, who was also involved in the local area's 14-19 partnership, submitted a bid, in conjunction with a local special school, which secured funding to buy external vocational provision at a level lower than Level 1. In addition to funding, the school was also supported during this process by the school council, mainstream providers, and the local authority curriculum development team to source and test appropriate provision. Sourcing and testing appropriate provision at this level proved challenging because there is a lack of available vocational provision below Level 1 within the local area.

The vocational learning initiative began with the introduction of Entry Level qualifications in bricklaying and joinery to both boys and girls; the school did not wish to make assumptions about 'who goes where' based on gender or disability. Due to the success of the initiative, the school

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<sup>2</sup> The P scales are differentiated performance criteria. They outline attainment for pupils working below Level 1 of the National Curriculum and describe some of the important skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils may gain from the programmes of study of the National Curriculum.

has been able to expand the range of vocational subjects which are open to all students to include: bricklaying, car maintenance, hairdressing, horticulture, joinery and office skills.

### **Impact of the action taken to address the equality issue(s)**

The school believes the equality duties have fuelled a 'whole different culture about learning, achievement and accreditation within the school' by challenging assumptions about stereotyped provision. As a result, an expectation now exists among pupils, staff, external providers and partners that all pupils regardless of ability can try a vocational course, and, importantly, can switch to a different course if they wish. In total, around 36 pupils are now working towards an accredited vocational course which is recognised among employers.

Using the rating software tool Insight, the school has been able to measure a wide range of positive impacts on the outcomes of those pupils working towards a vocational qualification. Firstly, pupils have increased their life and functional skills, such as personal responsibility, building relationships and teamwork, confidence and self-esteem, away from the school enclave in a work-related setting. The school has also observed that the vocational learning has helped to tackle some pupils' more extreme behaviours, like mood swings through the need for teamwork and group discussion. Anecdotal feedback from pupils shows that working towards and achieving accredited work-related learning has had a powerful effect. For example, the school indicated that pupils are less likely to feel different from their able-bodied siblings and friends as they can now talk about similar learning experiences and gain future employment. The school firmly believes that:

'The duties helped sharpen our thoughts. Achievement has been quite fluffy in special education. With the duties, achievement is seen as an entitlement. Previously the attitude was wouldn't it be lovely or very nice for them to have more opportunities. Now they are entitled to it.'

Headteacher

As a result, the school has tackled disability and gender stereotyping within subject and career choice. Pupils are now able to gain (for the first time) practical employment-related skills in a wide range of vocational subjects. One student who gained an Entry Level qualification in horticulture has since secured a work placement with the local council's estate department.

### **Enablers and barriers**

The duties have helped the school to 'keep challenging people' – including the school's staff and external training providers. This has helped to introduce non-stereotyped provision, and at learning levels not previously offered. Overall, the school reported that one of the key enablers was the school's attitude of 'taking a risk' and 'giving pupils a chance' to access new opportunities.

'We have hugely increased how much accreditation we do. And not just for accreditation sake. It is about pushing young people and moving them on into adult life with the right skills. We are now about achievement whereas in the past special education was about a certificate with a teddy on it. Now we are focused on what we can do for the pupils and what they can achieve.'

Headteacher

Anecdotal evidence shows that a key driver of pupils' interest in traditionally stereotyped vocational provision was the deliberate act to make female members of staff responsible for leading the traditionally male-dominated subjects such as bricklaying and joinery. Similarly, male staff were made responsible for leading office skills and hairdressing courses. This decision helped to tackle stereotyping and ensure that pupils felt comfortable in selecting a course. The school wanted to give the impression that a male pupil taking a hairdressing course was not unusual.

The lack of private training providers who offered accredited vocational training at the appropriate level which met the ability of their learners -

below Level 1 - was a key barrier in broadening the curriculum offered to disabled pupils. Duty legislation helped the school to overcome an attitude among local training providers to cater for students with complex needs and deliver appropriate vocational learning which up to that point did not exist. The school is currently looking to build on the successes achieved to date. As a result, the school is working with a range of partners to develop a new vocational level between Entry Level and Level 1 which meets the ability of pupils and moves them closer to the labour market.



## **Equality duties and schools      CASE STUDY 11**

Using the equality duties to develop a faith garden which helps to address racial tension and improve understanding of disability within the school and local community.

### **A description of the school**

This special school is located in Wales and its catchment area extends to five local authorities. The pupil population is 240 and there are around 150 teaching and support staff. The school's results are some of the best for special schools in Wales, both in terms of Estyn inspection ratings and academic achievement.

The headteacher has recently participated in equality duty training delivered by the local authority. This has helped the school to better understand its responsibilities under the public sector equality duties, for example, in relation to planning for appropriate physical access to the school. The school had previously adopted a more informal, reactive approach to access, making changes as and when the need arose.

During the most recent Estyn inspection in 2008, in which the school received five 1s and two 2s, inspectors reviewed the school's equality policies/schemes and action plans on gender, access and inclusion. In order to achieve a consistent approach to the equality duties throughout the school, the school has embedded the equality action plans in its schemes of work. Feedback from Estyn indicated this was not a typical way of responding to the equality duties. However, the report concluded that the school's approach in the areas of gender, access and inclusion has made a significant positive contribution to pupils' learning, development and social skills.

Pupils were praised in the inspection report for their respect of people with different backgrounds, beliefs and values from themselves as well as pupils with more severe disabilities. Teachers and support staff were also praised for a good understanding of pupils' individual needs and

teachers for their approach to equality issues in relation to gender, race and disability.

### **A description of the equality issues facing the school**

The wider community has experienced issues around a lack of awareness of other faiths/religions, resulting in heightened tension and a reduction in community cohesion, culminating in race riots a few years ago. These riots involved some of the pupils' parents. Although the school had not experienced any racial tension among its pupils while at school, it recognised that there was a need to promote better understanding of different identities and ethnicities among pupils, and that by doing so this could help to address the racial issues being faced within the wider community, of which the pupils were a part.

Raising awareness about disability among the local community is a further key challenge for the school. An attitude exists among the wider community and pupils who arrive from other schools that a disability means less ability. As a result, some pupils have low self-esteem and a lack of aspiration and the school suffers from some low attendance by these pupils.

### **The process and actions taken by the school to address these equality issues**

Involving and collecting feedback from pupils and staff about equality-related matters was a new approach undertaken by the school, and one which has helped it to become more aware of issues which previously they had not considered. The equality duties have meant that equality matters are now discussed during pupil and pupil/staff forums. Evidence on equality groups within the school is also collected from pupil surveys and from Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons.

The school now uses the insight gathered from these consultations to develop its disability, ethnicity and gender policies/schemes. To progress its equality policies, the school produces action plans which are embedded in subject area schemes of work (disability and ethnicity

action plans) and in PSHE (gender action plan). The school also has a separate action plan to improve accessibility, for example, physical access to the building. All action plans are also contained in the School Development Plan, which is reviewed annually by the senior leadership team.

Using the evidence collected and in order to specifically address the lack of knowledge within the school and wider community of other faiths and religions, the school has built a faith garden within the school grounds.

The idea for the faith garden came from the school council, which includes pupils, parents and members of staff. The deputy headteacher took the lead on the school's faith garden and formed a committee of pupils and staff who were involved in preparations for the project, for example, researching appropriate planting for the garden, sourcing funding and supporting volunteers such as parents and the local Youth Offending Team who helped to build the garden. The school also worked closely with local government and faith bodies provided expert historical information and advice on design.

‘We worked with a lot of churches in the area. The pupils had to research all the flowers and plants that needed to be planted. They had to research the need for the area. They had to go along to the local SACRA [Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education] and the national SACRA group to present what they were doing and why they were doing it ... a lot of ordering and research about what to buy ... different CDs, music tapes about the different religions.’

Deputy headteacher

The garden was funded externally by devolved government, the local Youth Offending Team and ‘in kind’ by local businesses, which provided essential materials.

The garden is used by everyone at the school and increasingly by the wider community, including parents, local faith groups and other local schools. Visitors to the garden are invited to take away packs, including CDs, about the different faiths represented and the school provides talks about the different religions to local school children.

### **Impact of the action taken to address the equality issue(s)**

The school believes that its pupils are much more interested and engaged in religious studies since the faith garden project was completed. As a result, pupil academic achievement in Religious Education has increased.

‘Pupils are much more interested [in religious studies] now; it’s also made our curriculum much more active ... In RE the exam results have improved.’

Deputy headteacher

In addition, the development and subsequent use of the faith garden is perceived to be improving the school’s understanding of and need to promote understanding about different faiths and ethnicities. As a result, a wider range of religious education courses are now offered to pupils. In addition, practices from a wider range of faiths are now promoted within the school and celebrated during the school’s Christmas service. These have helped to develop pupils’ understanding about differences further.

Although primarily designed to address the lack of knowledge within the school and wider community of other faiths/religions, the garden has also been used to help address the low level of aspiration and self-esteem that pupils may feel as a consequence of their disability. By welcoming other schools in the local area to the faith garden, the school has succeeded in establishing closer relationships with local mainstream schools. Consequently, the faith garden project has also helped to address some of the challenges relating to disability in school, as use of the faith garden has resulted in the mainstream schools approaching the special school for advice about learner needs, for example, examination

processes for special need pupils. Meanwhile, disabled pupils from local mainstream schools are given access to some of the special school's facilities, such as the café.

The school believes that increased exposure to pupils from mainstream schools, resulting directly and indirectly from the building of the faith garden, has contributed to higher levels of self-esteem among the special school's pupils. The school has reached this conclusion based on test results, feedback through Pupil Voice and anecdotal observations from parents and visitors to the school.

### **The key success factors**

Specific actions, such as undertaking consultation with pupils and staff and involving these groups, along with parents and external partners in delivering the faith garden are all considered to have contributed to the success of the project. The funding that the school received externally from devolved government, the local Youth Offending Team and local businesses ensured that the project could go ahead.

## **Equality duties and schools      CASE STUDY 12**

Using the equality duties to develop an equality action plan and using this to identify new ways of improving communication among children with speech impairments.

### **A description of the school**

This special school has a pupil population of 120, predominantly drawn from the town in which the school is located. Pupils are aged three to 19 and all have complex and profound or severe learning difficulties. The pupils' learning difficulties are varied and range from autism to acute medical conditions, such as multi-sensory impairment. Twice as many boys than girls attend the school and around a third of pupils are from ethnic minority groups. The school was graded 'good' and 'good, with some outstanding features' in its most recent Ofsted inspection in 2007.

### **A description of the equality issues facing the school**

The inability of pupils to communicate to their best ability was identified six years ago as an area of inequality for pupils at the school when a new headteacher took over the leadership of the school. The problems pupils experienced with their communication skills not only affected the quality of their lives at school, but also their ability to interact with others outside of the school environment. It was also detrimental to their behaviour, leading at times to pupils being excluded from school.

'The children would be throwing equipment, breaking windows, head-banging ... all of this was very much in evidence when I first became head. The challenging behaviours were appalling ... Children had to be physically excluded from school as well back in 2004, 2005 because they were harming other children and staff.'  
Headteacher

The school identified the pupils' lack of a 'language' of communication as the key contributory factor for children with speech impairments. Meanwhile, a lack of specialist equipment, such as switch technology,

was seen to inhibit communication for pupils who had both speech impairments and limited mobility/movement.

### **The process and actions taken by the school to address these equality issues**

The duties have helped the school to act on the school's issues in relation to disability. Indeed, the equality duties have led the school to produce an equality action plan, the content of which is also included within the School Development Plan and Self-Evaluation Form. All the school's policies – whether directly related to the equality areas or not – are considered in light of this plan and all teachers have to make sure they meet its requirements in their own planning. This approach has raised awareness among teachers of the need for equal opportunities, has enabled the school to prioritise its actions and has ensured that appropriate actions are taken to address equality issues.

One action taken to address the communication challenge within the school was the introduction of Makaton sign language, a system of symbols and signs designed to increase understanding and provide a means of communication for people with speech impairments.

The head teacher, supported by the senior leadership team, introduced the initiative in 2006. The school sought specialist advice from speech and language therapists, and consulted the Ofsted reports from other schools using Makaton.

The first step was to train teachers, first in the principles and theories behind Makaton and then in how to use Makaton to communicate with pupils. Although a few teachers have shown resistance to the initiative, all the teachers now use Makaton in every aspect of the school's activities, including lessons, school assemblies, extracurricular activities as well as dedicated Makaton clubs.

‘We sign with the children all the time, the children are also signing now. We have Makaton clubs at lunchtime, they all go, they love it.’

Headteacher

By holding events in school and by communicating with parents about Makaton at parents’ evenings, the school has made sure that parents are kept up-to-date on the initiative and have the opportunity to feed their views into its development.

In 2009 the school broadened its approach by launching its Makaton training programme for parents. This was designed to enable families to communicate with each other outside school and directly addressed concerns raised by parents in school-administered questionnaires about their inability to communicate with their children. Although some parents were initially reluctant to sign up, many have been persuaded of the benefits by other parents who have already attended the course. A total of 35 families have learnt how to communicate using Makaton and more are on the waiting list.

The school also offers training to the individuals and community organisations with whom/which pupils are likely to come into contact outside of school, such as people working in respite care or running clubs for children with learning difficulties. The money that the school receives for this service is ploughed back into new communication aids for its pupils, which are also shared with other schools.

‘We have a waiting list now of people who want to be trained ... people who work with people with learning difficulties ... it’s snowballed completely ... our children might go to a play scheme, might go to a Saturday club, might go to respite, so we’re training up those people as well.’

Headteacher



Funding for the initiative has come from the specialist funding the school has been able to secure due to its status as a special school. This has enabled the school to employ a speech and language therapist, who runs the communication resource base for the school.

### **Impact of the action taken to address the equality issue(s)**

Following the introduction of Makaton, the school has noticed a marked improvement in the ability of its pupils to communicate. While most pupils are able to communicate using Makaton, many also have improved speech directly as a result of using Makaton, since it also develops the part of the brain responsible for speech. These achievements are often remarked upon by parents.

‘We’ve got a lot of testimonials from parents, quite heartening really, saying thank you for what you have done, it’s made such a difference to our child.’

Headteacher

The school directly links the introduction of Makaton to an increase in pupils’ academic achievements, which are formally tracked by the school. Pupils are now making ‘good progress’, which contrasts with the conclusions from the school’s 2004 Ofsted inspection.

‘Children are saying more, they’re making good progress ... measuring their progress over time we know now that they’re making good progress, whereas in the previous Ofsted in 2004 they weren’t making good progress.’

Headteacher

The school has also noticed a reduction in the challenging behaviours presented by its pupils since the introduction of Makaton, with the number of reported incidents having fallen dramatically.

### **The key success factors**

The equality duties have provided a framework for key steps to be taken to address the communication issue within the school. The school's senior leadership team and staff have shown enthusiasm for the Makaton initiative. This, coupled with the availability of specialist funding has ensured that the project has been a success.